(b) whether it is also a fact that no action has been taken against any official;

(c) if not, the details of the enquiry held and action taken.

(d) whether the officers who held enquiry were the competent authority; and

(e) if not, the reasons for not taking action against the persons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A Departmental Court of Inquiry was ordered. Six Government officials were found responsible for the lapses. Disciplinary cases against two subordinate officials were finalised and penalties awarded. Further another was issued recordable warning while another was reprimanded. In the case of remaining two officials inquiry proceedings are in progress.

(d) and (e) Do not arise in view of (b) and (c)

Raising of retirement age of Armed Forces personnel

1097. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any survey or opinion poll has been made amongst Armed Forces personnel with regard to raising of retirement age whereby over 9-lakh Army jawans have indicated their option for going without at two year service extension; and

(b) if so, what decisions have been taken by Government in the light thereof, including that in respect of Army Medical Corps?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Strengthening of defence system

1098. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken fresh initiatives to strengthen defence system through upgradation of technology/joint ventures/import of latest equipment/systems from friendly countries like Russia and France;

(b) if so, the details of the proposals finalised/under consideration and financial implications thereof; and

(c) details of plans formulated and strategies worked out to make defence wings self-reliant and modern for the current year and Ninth Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Strengthening the defence preparedness of the country is an on-going process involving the optimal utilisation of the human and material resources of the armed forces, defence research and development, indigenisation and self-reliance and defence cooperation with friendly countries. This is carried out within the allocated budgetary funds for the Ministry of Defence.

(c) The ten-year national mission for enhancing self-reliance in defence systems has been launched in 1995 to increase the indigenous content in annual defence acquisitions from 30% to 70%. This objective is projected to be achieved by the year 2005.

Crash of fighter planes

1099. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA' Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of fighter planes crashed during the last five years, category-wise;

(b) whether any study has been done to know the reasons therefor; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) 68 MIG; 6 Jaguar, 4 Sea Harrier and one Kiran fighter planes have crashed since April, 1994.

(b) and (c) A Court/Board of Inquiry is ordered in every accident to find out the causes. Most of these accidents are attributed to Technical Defects/Human Error. Further, a High Powered Committee on fighter aircraft accident was constituted under the chairmanship of Scientific Adviser to RM to analyse the causes of the accidents which submitted its report in September, 1997. It has made recommendations to minimise accident rate. Implementation of these recommendations would involve changes in organisational structure, procedures, training design, technology etc. Necessary instructions have been issued to the agencies/Departments concerned to take suitable action in terms of the recommendations of the Committee.

Re-orientation of Civil Defence

1100. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal for re-orientation of Civil Defence and make its training compulsory for school and college students to equip them to handle emergencies not only during war time but also for rendering rescue and relief services during disasters;

(b) if so, the details of comprehensive action plan proposed to be implemented; and

(c) the details of changes perceived in the Civil Defence Act, 1968?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Considering the importance attached to the Civil Defence tranining in schools/colleges, the Ministry of Home Affairs had taken up the matter with the Ministry of Human Resource Development for introducing Civil Defence/Civil Protection in the curriculum of schools, colleges and Universities as compulsory activity. As a follow up action, the Ministry of Human Resource Development have written to schools and the University division and concerned organisation for its implementation. A comprehensive action plan for Civil Defence activity in schools/colleges would be drawn by the concerned authorities. As regards use of Civil Defence volunteers for rescue and relief operations, these volunteers are trained to such activities and they are utilised as and when the need if felt. So far there has been no amendment to the Civil Defence Act, 1968.

Accidents during training of pilots

1101. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of accidents taken place during the flying training of trainee pilots in the Air Force during the years 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(b) whether it is a fact that many of the aircrafts used for training have long exhausted threir normal period of time; and

(c) whether the Indian Air Force has taken sufficient measures to reduce the accidents?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) There were two accidents each during the years 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 which took place during the flying training of trainee pilots in Air Force.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Accidents and their cause factors are continuously reviewed and analysed by the Air Force. Remedial measures are accordingly taken which is a continuous process.